1.1 Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission (SMRPC)

Interview Type	Personal, COG/RPC
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Interviewer	AGI / Richard Sutton (rs@appgeo.com)
Interviewed:	J.T. Lockman, Planning Director jlockman@server.eddmaine.org Gordon Workman, GiS Coordinator gworkman@server.eddmaine.org Paul Schumacher, Executive Director pschumacher@server.eddmaine.org
Staff Size (approx)	11
Member Municipalities	39
Budget (approx)	
URL:	http://www.smrpc.maine.org

1.1.1 Agency Overview

SMRPC is a council of governments that has been assisting its thirty-nine member communities with development, water quality and housing issues for over thirty years. SMRPC provides a variety of products and services to these municipalities, as well as to businesses, non-profit organizations and citizens. These include land use planning, transportation planning, supporting economic and community development efforts, assisting in municipal management, and serving as a bridge between several state agencies and member municipalities. SMRPC also provides GIS services to member municipalities, ranging from initial GIS needs assessments to operational assistance for independent municipal implementations to providing training, as well as performing numerous regional analyses.

1.1.2 GIS Initiatives

1.1.2.1 Overview of GIS Utilization

SMRPC has a GIS coordinator (Gordon Workman) who operates at ¾ FTE and oversees operational details of the system. Additionally, four other employees, including the planning director (J.T. Lockman) utilize GIS at an additional aggregate equivalent of approximiately 1 ¼ FTE.

GIS is utilized for desktop analysis, data automation and production, public presentations and hardcopy output at numerous formats. The primary and currently funded GIS projects include

- Floodplain delineation
- Shoreland zoning mapping
- Comprehensive plan mapping
- Regional parcel mapping
- Beach plans
- Municipal GIS development
- Training

1.1.2.2 GIS Operating Environment and Infrastructure

SMRPC presently maintains

- (12) copies of ArcView 3.2a
- (1) copy of PC ArcInfo
- (1) copy of AutoCad R14
- (1) copy of ArcGIS (ArcView) 8.1

All personnel are connected to T1 Internet access and connected to the Maine statewide area network.

There is a critical need for ArcInfo access for GIS production work and regional analysis. SMRPC would prefer this to be installed locally (at SMRPC's offices), but thin client access (such as Citrix) that would provide this resource from a remote site would be better than the situation at present. Expense of this product is the main impediment to acquiring it.

1.1.2.3 GIS Data Resources and Requirements

1.1.2.3.1 Spatial Data

SMRPC creates and enhances a significant amount of spatial data, as well as utilizing imported data sets from the Maine OGIS warehouse and additional private and public sources.

General zoning is maintained in digital format for (16) towns, including Arundel, Alfred, Berwick, Buxton, Dayton, Eliot, Hollis, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Kittery, Limington, Lyman, Sanford, South Berwick and Wells. These data are referenced to 1:24,000 USGS topographic maps and have been automated through funding through the Maine State Planning Office.

Parcel data is maintained in digitial format for more than (15) towns. These include Alfred, Arundel, Berwick, Buxton, Eliot, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Kittery, North Berwick, Ogunquit, South Berwick, Stoneham Wells and York. Saco has recently been completed by JWSewall but has not yet been delivered to SMRPC, and Sanford is in a state of preliminary development. While all of these are derived from town tax maps, their format, scale and quality vary significantly. SMRPC is working aggressively to develop digitized parcel mapping over its entire service area, but these efforts are funded sporadically and uniform standards both for initial automation and ongoing maintenance of these data have not been adopted.

Comprehensive Plan mapping layers including soils, slopes, wetlands, FEMA flood plains.

Base and Analysis layers, including:

- All Maine OGIS data

- All Genie data
- Maine DOT traffic counts
- Census data

Full itemization of datalayers in use may be found at:
http://www.smrpc.maine.org/gisdata.html

Currently unavailable but desired data sets include

- Shoreland zoning: while this has been produced for numerous SMRPC towns, it is a painstaking and expensive task: A recently completed municipality took 80 hours of research and analysis time. Delivering this product, enhanced with municipally specific regulations, would be vastly easier if a state-supplied, standard GIS SLZ basemap was available to work from.
- Land Use data: All that is available is the 30meter Landsat TM data derived from the Maine GAP Analysis project. This is inadequate to the needs of municipal development tracking or buildout analysis.
- Conflated E911 and Classed Maine DOT roads

1.1.2.4 GIS Applications and Application Requirements

SMRPC provides numerous GIS services to its member communities. These include

- GIS Needs Assessments
- GIS Implementation Assistance
- Management of municipal GIS data and systems
- Data automation assistance
- Map and data analysis
- Global Positioning System services: SMRPC has limited access to GPS data acquisition services (5 meter accuracy) and makes this available to members
- Training: SMRPC offers a 6 hour course in ArcView. Have put 45 individuals through the course

Planned future GIS activity and applications:

- CommunityViz buildout scenario work. SMRPC has purchased this product from the Orton Foundation in Vermont in order to test alternative growth scenarios.
- Would like more automated and uniform comprehensive plan mapping
- Poised to embark on a regional open space project

1.1.3 Other Relevant Issues

- Projection Issues: York, Wells, and Kittery have done comp plan updates in NAD 83 State Plane instead of the state standard NAD 83 UTM Zone 19 meters. The Kennebunkport Sewer District created a digital parcel base in an unknown coordinate system, so SMRPC had to "georeference" the drawing over again. (Consultants were from New Hampshire and were "used to" State Plane, and not

aware of Maine's standards. UNH Complex Systems did the work for Kittery and Wells, and private engineering firms did York and Kennebunkport.) Kennebunk had their parcel data in UTM's originally, but their Asst. Assessor/Technical person converted it to State Plane because he found that digital submissions of subdivision plans fit better into a digital State Plane map. Evidently, municipalities and their contractors have not known about or seen a need to follow a State of Maine standard. Needless to say, this had led to considerable confusion. As SMRPC collects digital parcel information for its service region, they must spend significant time discussing, exploring, explaining and handling these thorny issues, while attempting to gather it all into NAD 83 UTM. It is a significant accomplishment that the State OGIS has standardized on NAD 83 UTM's, but there is not statewide awareness of the need to follow a standard. Similarly, SMRPC contracts with numerous New Hampshire planners who do not use Maine's projection, and this has caused significant difficulties in coordination and regional planning efforts.

- Comprehensive Plan Support – SMRPC has been providing Digital Parcel maps plus a full set of comprehensive plan maps for about $5,000-$6,000 per town (more for towns with over 5,000 parcels). If the town already has digital parcels, the figure is about $2,500 - $3,000 for a full set of comprehensive plan maps. These prices are for a set of color wall maps, and there is an additional charge for creating black & white page size formats. These prices are based on the fact that SMRPC has already completed the initial collection of environmental constraint data using preliminary assessment funding from their SPO contract (another $1,000 or so, per town). Usually the towns also kick in about $1,000 of their own money for completing their digital zoning layer.

  All told, it costs SMRPC about $9,000 to make a parcel based GIS system for an average town at 40 foot accuracy (based on 1:24000 scale USGS base mapping). SMRPC doesn't typically include shoreland zoning in comp plan mapping because to create a SLZ map itself is a separate $2500 project. It is SMRPC's feeling that the complexities of shoreland zoning make it alone sufficient reason to implement GIS statewide.

- SMRPC is involved in investigating various mechanisms for promoting smart growth within its region. Transferable Development Rights (TDR) is one such mechanism that was discussed. The consensus is that TDR will be exceedingly difficult if not impossible to implement inter-municipally within Maine.
- It is difficult to impossible for SMRPC to allocate funds to acquire suitable higher-end technical training for its GIS professionals. The system has been "built from scraps" funded by SPO grants and by municipalities through plannig board site plan reviews, but this amounts to a constant game of running to stand still.
- SMRPC believe the Maine OGIS to be underfunded and overextended, and perceives large political and technical conflicts with state vs. regional services: lines of responsibility are not clearly drawn and most mandates are unfunded.

The absence of technical support is a huge and crippling issue. If training is not readily available, some sort of technical assistance needs to be provided, either through the state or another mechanism, to keep initiatives moving along with necessary technical tips.

1.1.4 Major Benefits and Cost Justification

If SMRPC had the necessary data and staff resources to assist member towns in planning and resource modeling, enormous gains could be made in the evolution of land regulation development, enforcement and appropriate land use in southern Maine. Zoning could be generalized and consolidated throughout the region to foster development of TDRs. Appropriate development could be encouraged and attracted over multiple jurisdictions. Comprehensive plans could be completed and updated using standardized methodologies and templates, and resultant data could be rolled up to a central repository for interagency use.

SMRPC has the knowledge and commitment to serve as a flagship GIS-enabled planning agency. Appropriately funded and staffed to meet the needs of its member communities, SMRPC will be the keystone in utilizing GIS to inform the future of growth planning and development assistance in southern Maine.